

itors who are interested in these authentic sites, many of whom will enjoy the area's traditional culture, crafts, and outdoor recreation activities as well.

#### *Lessons Learned*

A word to local groups contemplating an effort to preserve their own historic site: it takes a lot of hard work, a lot of help, and a leap of faith. There are many sources of ideas, training, and technical assistance to help with interpretation and resource preservation. Money is available if you hunt for it, believe in your site, and communicate your enthusiasm. Involve as much of your community as possible, build partnerships, and keep cultivating new volunteers. And take it one step at a time.

To National Park Service or other government professionals who may be working with community groups: your help does make a difference. The RMBF has had an enormous amount of help from the ABPP and the Forest Service. In both cases, the support and help from the people in

those agencies have been at least as valuable to us as the monetary grants. As trained professionals, you can offer the expertise and experience that can help a community group focus its efforts and reach a concrete result. Be willing to share your knowledge when asked, and help guide them to other financial or technical support resources. In turn, they can provide the local connections that may help make your work more effective. When the enthusiasm, commitment, and local knowledge of a community non-profit group can be partnered with the expertise and resources of a professional agency, both will come out as winners—and many more sites can be preserved.

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*Phyllis Baxter is a founding member, past president, and currently executive director of the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation. She is also active with other local historical and preservation groups, is a civilian reenactor with the West Virginia Reenactors Association, and serves on the board of the statewide Preservation Alliance of West Virginia.*

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Nancy V. Webster

## Revolutionary Preservation

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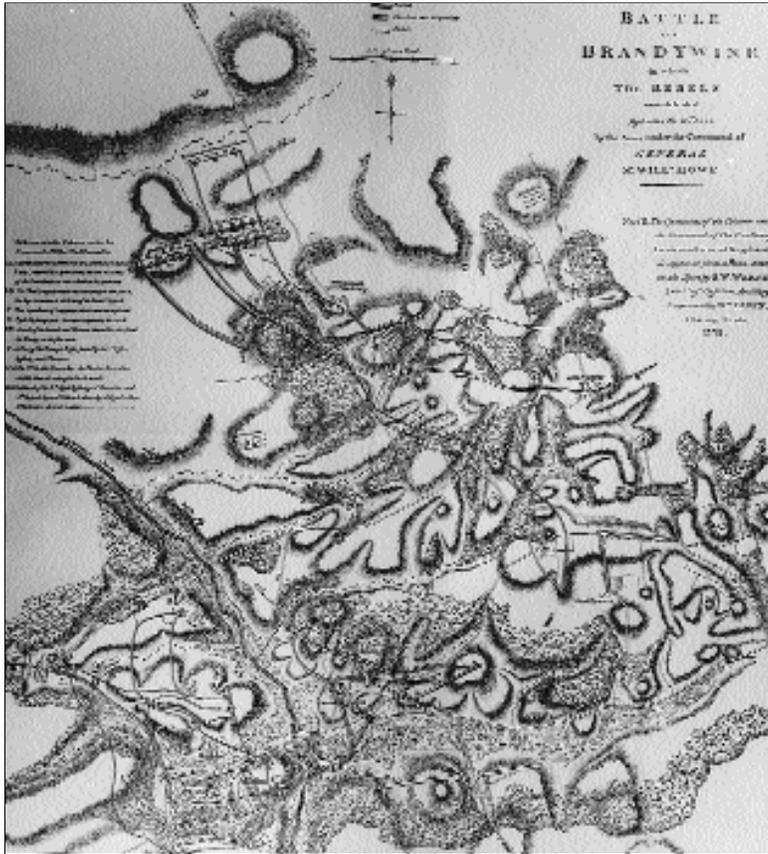
**U**nlike Civil War sites, Revolutionary War sites have yet to resonate with the general public. Americans do not identify easily with the uniforms, language, and tactics of the late-18th century. Another public relations problem is that American forces lost many major battles in the Revolutionary War. The Battle of Brandywine, fought September 11, 1777, was such a defeat—although contemporary Continentals felt they had won. They believed, as Brig. Gen. George Weedon did, that “such another Victory would establish the Rights of America, & I wish them [the British] the Honor of the Field again tomorrow on the same terms.”<sup>1</sup>

Today, the Brandywine Battlefield National Historic Landmark, 10 square miles of scenic, rolling countryside, nearly all in private ownership, is vanishing under 20 years of heavy development pressure from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Wilmington, Delaware. The regional pattern of large, 300-year-old Quaker farmsteads is giving way to \$700,000 tract mansions on postage stamp acreage. The area is considered such a desirable

location that developers make weekly bids to long-time landowners, many of whom are senior citizens considering relocation. As the parcels are subdivided, ownership is transferred to new residents unfamiliar with the history of the area and likely to move on within five years.

Further challenging the survival of this important resource is the fragmentation of jurisdiction among two counties, six municipalities, and one small state park,<sup>2</sup> with most of the actual decisions being made piecemeal at the township level. The battlefield's proximity to the popular tourist destinations of Philadelphia, Valley Forge, Longwood Gardens, and Winterthur serves to diminish rather than draw visitation and corporate interest and funding. And, strangely enough, the region's plethora of American Revolutionary War riches has been taken for granted for so long that many people find it impossible to contemplate that the landscape and its cultural resources could disappear, assuming that an unknown, unnamed someone else is looking after the battlefield.

Ownership in fee simple, the traditional method of saving significant terrain and structures,



British map of the Brandywine battlefield, drafted by a Hessian artillery officer shortly after the battle. Photo courtesy Delaware County Planning Department.

is not a viable option for such a sprawling resource. Instead, a carefully plotted network of conservation easements, zoning overlays, private preservation, local tax incentives, buffering requirements, and similar planning tools may be the answer. A task force of volunteers is using each of these approaches to save the Revolutionary War battlefield that straddles the Brandywine River in Pennsylvania.

By the mid-1980s, it became apparent to local planners that the general public was unfamiliar with the battlefield's National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation and that the purpose and public responsibilities associated with the designation were likewise obscure. Although designated as one of the earliest National Historic Landmarks in 1961, the battlefield was not officially demarcated until May 1977, 200 years after the action. Not surprisingly, local residents did not understand the objectives associated with this designation. Nor did the federal designation impact land use decisions at the local level.

Most people confuse the Brandywine Battlefield NHL, the 10 square miles over which the battle was fought, with the 50-acre Brandywine State Park created in 1949. This park lies on U.S. Route 1, making it easy for the visitor to locate, and includes two 18th-century farmsteads used as Washington's headquarters and Lafayette's quarters. No significant part of the bat-

tle took place on these grounds, and Washington's command post was elsewhere during the action. The existence of this public park confuses people and obscures the location, size, and threat to the entire battlefield.

September 11, 1977, saw a magnificent reenactment of the battle on original land that attracted one of the U.S. Bicentennial's largest audiences. Unfortunately, this enthusiasm failed to spill over into long-range protection for the NHL. To begin to offset this inertia, a small leaflet outlining a driving tour of the battlefield with sketches of the action at important locations was prepared by a local historian in 1986. This outreach tool and steady comments from several local planners began to raise public awareness.

In 1988, Birmingham Township was concerned enough to apply for a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant in order to compile a cultural resources management study. Several local townships and the Delaware County, Pennsylvania, Planning Department more than matched the CLG funding with in-kind services.<sup>3</sup> The study took a parcel-by-parcel look at the terrain, troop movements, architecture, archeological sites, and scenic vistas. The two-volume, 500-page final report was intended as a reference document for use by local government agencies, not as popular history. It provided recommendations in professional language so that those recommendations could easily be incorporated into Environmental Impact Statements and necessary local permitting processes. After the report won the 1990 Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Award and generated much favorable comment, 1,000 copies of a condensed, user-friendly version were printed and distributed in 1992 using National Park Service (NPS) funding. Both the 1989 and the 1992 studies included recommendations for both public and private actions to retain the integrity of the NHL. While several townships were notably conscientious in their application of the information and suggestions, several were not. Anti-regulatory feelings, which were intensified by neighborhood associations' restrictive rules, fueled resistance to preservation.

The increasing local awareness of threats to the battlefield and the individual efforts of area public and non-profit agencies gradually led to a loose confederation of interested parties. Once organized, it became the Brandywine Battlefield Task Force. Its goals reflected county and regional agencies' concern for the preservation of the historic site. The Task Force also understood the importance of respecting and being sensitive to municipal and landowner interests. Chaired by the head of the Pennsylvania Bureau for Historic Preservation, the Task Force has a core of regular

members plus members from agencies who attend on an as-needed basis.<sup>4</sup> The public is always welcome at meetings and the local press has faithfully followed each new action and development.

The member organizations of the Task Force have common interests but different individual goals and constraints. For example, the Brandywine Conservancy, an environmental management non-profit organization, has taken on the large task of acquiring easements, which public agencies cannot execute. However, the Task Force collectively determined which parcels were the critical ones on which to seek easements and Delaware County planners compiled the research and the determinations of significance. Chester County has an open space fund; Delaware County does not, but provides more staff assistance. Municipal representatives provide local involvement, taxpayer contacts, and grassroots support. Each member agency contributes time and support in its area of expertise, with the overall plan of action approved step-by-step by the whole group. Policy is decided by the Task Force, while action is taken by committees on Funding, Easements, Interpretation, Ordinance Language, and Outreach, or by designated agencies. The Brandywine Battlefield Task Force is sensitive to competing interests, such as owner privacy and heritage tourism; and each action is preceded by public participation.

This structure was not planned; rather, it evolved and there have been many stumbles along the way. Perhaps the most frustrating and recurrent issue is how to balance preservation with inevitable new growth. The premium price commanded by housing in the Brandywine Valley means that lot averaging, cluster development, or similar incentives do not appeal financially to developers. Single family mansions on tiny lots continue to bring high prices, despite a softening

real estate market. Attempts at preservation by site design—clustering the building sites to allow open corridors around historic resources—have had varied success because of piecemeal application. Constrained by the terrain and conservative local codes, design guidelines have not yet been applied beyond individual subdivisions to the entire NHL.<sup>5</sup>

### *Protecting Critical Parcels*

To counteract most effectively the rapid build-out of the Brandywine battlefield, the Task Force decided to work on preserving 18 critical parcels first. These parcels were evaluated as highly significant, large parcels facing immediate threat.<sup>6</sup> The methods for protecting these parcels—their landscapes, viewsheds, and cultural resources—have been varied and unique to each area.

The Brandywine Conservancy recently obtained a facade easement for the 1704 Brinton House, which was used as a British headquarters. The Task Force is compiling a list of other structures that could benefit from similar facade protection.

Thombury Township found that a zoning overlay was the best way to protect the most significant section of a large family trust property where there was potential that the heirs would opt for full development. The overlay designates a third of the parcel, which includes major battle positions and farm buildings used for a British field hospital, as historic open space. The remainder of the overlay district has density, usage, and lot averaging regulations keyed to the protected area.

An interesting outgrowth of site design has been the protection of the Continental army's third battle line, Sandy Hollow. This 60-acre, self-contained viewshed is the site of Brandywine's culminating action. The Task Force negotiated with the developer for more than two years before the Sandy Hollow site was designated as required Preferred Residential Development open space.<sup>7</sup> Birmingham Township accepted the land as a municipal park. However, the township wanted to guarantee protection even further. In 1996, it voluntarily commissioned a conservation easement on its own park, thereby ensuring that inappropriate construction such as ball fields or tot lots will never adversely affect the resource.

Creative dissemination of accurate and authoritative information can lead to consensus. The Craig Farm, a critical parcel still in contention, contains the site of post-battle encampments, a field hospital, one of the battlefield's few known burial sites, and all of its original hedgerow configurations. The developer was resistant to any archeological investigations or protective buffers

*Taken from the historic Birmingham Meeting House cemetery, this idyllic view of the Brandywine battlefield belies the threat to the landscape. New luxury residences are just beyond sight lines.*





The Craig Farm barn, site of British mass burials. Original hedgerow in background screens new single-family mansions.

around the hospital site until a letter of concern was read at a public meeting. The letter was written by Ian G. Robertson, Director of the National Army Museum, London, England.

....The British Army always buried all its dead where they fell; this means there are cemeteries all over the World and reliance is placed on the generosity of spirit of the host community to see that those buried there are allowed to rest in peace. It is a matter of supreme irony that some of the British Army graves disturbed already at the Brandywine battlefield were those of the 64th Foot, whose successors in the Staffordshire Regiment fought alongside American troops in the Gulf War of 1991! I note that the logo at the top right-hand corner of your notepaper includes the words *Take Pride in America* and perhaps one way would be for all of those concerned to respect the graves of those who played a formative part in making American history....<sup>8</sup>

The letter's recitation resulted in stunned silence and the developer's immediate cooperation.

Where several critical parcels are adjacent, the Task Force found that preservation easements are more attractive to individual owners when they perceive themselves as part of a total landscape. Not only is there a "domino effect," but such group marketing may be crucial to successful design and protection. In the Birmingham Meetinghouse area, a significant viewshed includes five properties. In order for the owners to retain their land's investment value, most wished to develop parts of their holdings. Yet the buildable areas of the viewshed were not apportioned equally among the five parcels. To protect the historic viewshed, the Task Force is facilitating a remarkable legal agreement among the property owners. The owners pooled their properties into one design whole, designated one area for new,

clustered construction, and guaranteed an equal return for each owner. Development will be placed in the least significant areas and beyond sight lines. Without this agreement, only one or two owners would have benefited financially, and the viewshed would likely have been impaired.

#### *Other Possibilities*

The Task Force is addressing Brandywine's continuing problem of public awareness in several ways. One method is a "familiarization tour," which delves equally into historical information and examples of preservation opportunities. The federal, state, and local elected officials who attended the first tour in May 1996 expressed much enthusiasm and support. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission subsequently endorsed the activity. A Commission member was so impressed he drafted "Commonwealth Treasures" legislation.<sup>9</sup> Similar tours are organized for 1997 to acquaint state and local agencies' staff, appointed officials, landowners, and heritage tourism personnel with Brandywine's significance and opportunities.

There has never been an interpretation plan for the battlefield, so a Task Force committee is writing one now. The plan will incorporate concerns of local citizens, goals of the local historical society, plans of the two visitor and convention bureaus, and concepts of a regional group, the Council of Revolutionary War Sites. The final document will guide the interpretive efforts of Task Force member organizations and the Brandywine Battlefield State Park.

With Brandywine's 225th anniversary just five years away (2002), the battlefield's integrity faces zero hour. It is already too late for some possible solutions, such as direct ownership, so a combination of approaches is mandatory. Flexible, parcel-by-parcel solutions are being created for the NHL. The Task Force's ambitious program of preservation, easements, interpretation, archeology, and education attracted the first American Battlefield Protection Program funding award for a Revolutionary War site as well as special recognition and funding from the state. The Task Force is now in its third year, and believes that its experience should encourage all who face the challenge of preserving historic places and open space threatened by urban and suburban expansion.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> George Weedon to John Page, 11 September 1777, in The Weedon Papers, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.
- <sup>2</sup> Birmingham, Kennett, Pennsbury, Thornbury, and Westtown Townships in Chester County, Pennsylvania; Chadds Ford Township in Delaware County, Pennsylvania; and the Brandywine State Park. The Brandywine Battlefield NHL does not

include the entire approach route or the flanking movements of the British army. If it did, eight more townships, including one in the state of Delaware, would be affected.

- 3 Webster, Nancy V., Martha L. Wolf, Betty Cosans-Zebooker, and Ken Joire, *Brandywine Battlefield National Historic Landmark Cultural Resource Management Study* (Delaware County Planning Department, Media, Pennsylvania, 1989).
- 4 Task Force members are particularly appreciative of the active support of NPS historian William Bolger, a member from the beginning, and of Karen Rehm, Chief of Interpretation at Valley Forge National Historic Site.
- 5 There are two Historic Architectural Review Boards that apply design guidelines in two townships within the NHL.
- 6 Criteria for evaluation of these critical parcels was based on the terrain's significance to the battle, the significance of the military action that occurred on that ground (such as a pitched battle, skirmish, or maneuvers), presence of cultural resources (such as historic buildings, roads, or archeological sites), and whether the site was immediately threatened. The size of the parcel was also an important determine.
- 7 In Pennsylvania, new, large-lot housing communities designated as Preferred Residential Developments are required to set aside 4% of the total development as open space.
- 8 Ian G. Robertson, Director of the National Army Museum, London, England, to Katherine H.

Stevenson, Associate Regional Director, Cultural Resources Management, National Park Service, Philadelphia, 26 February 1993, in response to notification of impending development at the Craig property, site of the American's final defensive position at Brandywine and of known 64th Foot burials. Delaware County Planning Department, Media, Pennsylvania.

- 9 Pennsylvania's new Commonwealth Treasures legislation is designed to give special designation to historic sites, artifacts, structures, and records that played a special role in the state's history. The designation is expected to raise awareness of the value of the Treasures with the Governor, the legislature, state agencies, and the public. Commonwealth Treasures will receive special consideration in grant funding, technical assistance, and public programs. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission will officially designate the Brandywine Battlefield National Historic Landmark as the first Commonwealth Treasure in June 1997.

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*Nancy V. Webster, AICP, is Principal Planner with Delaware County, Pennsylvania, and the project manager/author of the 1989 cultural resource management study for the Brandywine Battlefield NHL. She is also a professional historian and continues to publish and lecture on Delaware Valley topics.*

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Susan Escherich

## National Historic Landmark Battlefields

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**N**ational Historic Landmarks symbolize and commemorate the most important aspects of United States history. Landmarks are chosen for their national significance and integrity, i.e., the extent to which they retain their historic qualities. Visiting these places allows modern people to step back in time and experience the lives their predecessors led in ways not otherwise possible. Numerous battlefields allow us to contemplate events that shaped our nation.

Approximately 3% of all National Historic Landmarks are battlefields or forts associated with particular military campaigns. Some, like Fort de la Boulaye, built in Louisiana in 1700, even predates the United States. Fort de la Boulaye was built by the French when they occupied the Mississippi River Valley. Indian attacks forced its abandonment in 1707. Fort San Carlos de

Barrancas in Pensacola, Florida, and Fort San Marcos de Apalache, near Tallahassee, were built by the Spanish to defend their empire against the United States. They fell to Andrew Jackson in 1814 and 1818, respectively, opening the way for acquisition of Florida.

Currently, about 26% of all landmark battlefields are associated with the Revolutionary War. They include such well-known sites as Valley Forge and Brandywine in Pennsylvania, Monmouth and Morristown in New Jersey, and Fort Stanwix and Saratoga in New York. In the South, Revolutionary War landmark battlefields include Cowpens and Kings Mountain in South Carolina, Moores Creek and Guilford Courthouse in North Carolina, and Yorktown in Virginia. Non-battlefield landmarks associated with that war include Scotchtown, Virginia, the home of Patrick